

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-146A U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

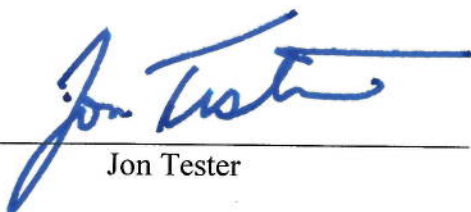
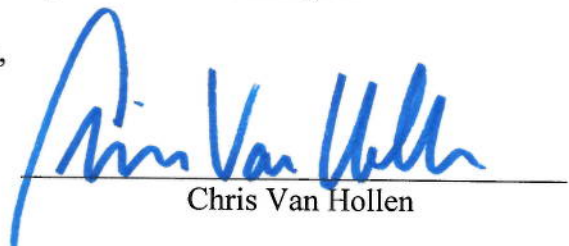
Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to you about the pressing need for increased investments in special education in Fiscal Year 2018. In the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal government promised to assume 40 percent of the additional costs associated with providing a high-quality education to students with disabilities. However, Congress has never met that promise, with the federal share of IDEA grants to states currently hovering around 15 percent. This failure to live up to the promise of IDEA harms schools and students throughout our states. We urge you to use this opportunity to greatly increase IDEA funding and move the federal share as close as possible to 40 percent.

IDEA places a number of expectations on our nation's public schools to ensure that their students are not overlooked or underserved simply because they have needs that differ from those of other children. These requirements are essential to ensuring that all American children have the opportunity to succeed, but they come with significant costs. Inadequate federal funding undermines the goals of IDEA, forces harsh choices on school leaders, and saps resources from schools' many other needs.

Congress can and must do better for our nation's schools. Right now, we have an opportunity to give a real boost to students with disabilities in our nation's public schools. We strongly encourage you to increase the federal share of IDEA funding by as many percentage points as possible, and we look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

  
Jon Tester  
Chris Van Hollen